

Communication Report October 29, 2020



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Faculty Senate Special-Called Meeting on FYS standing committee resolution commenced at 3:45pm

*Please see documents on Faculty Senate Blackboard site, Meetings folder, October 29, for full background details regarding the full context and complexity of issues surrounding FYS, FYS standing committee resolution passed by Faculty Senate March 5, 2020, response from Dr. Morgan October 27, 2020, overture regarding committee constituency revision proposed by Provost October 17 for full comment October 19, and comparison between overture and Faculty Senate FYS standing committee resolution.

Motion: Senator Graves motioned to “allow guests to the special-called meeting to speak at the meeting.” Senator Sharp seconded the motion. Faculty Senate affirmed the motion.

Regent Adams provided an overview of unresolved issues and timeline concerning FYS. The following is taken from her document posted to Faculty Senate Blackboard shell.

Problem #1: the current FYS violates SASCOC standards.

FYS is a course granted 3 hours of **academic credit** in the General Education core. The current incarnation is a non-disciplinary student success course. The administrator who created this freshman orientation oversees all aspects of its curriculum and provides pre-packaged content to FYS instructors (who are primarily fractionalized staff) each term. SASCOC standard 10.4.c: **Specifics for how the current version of FYS violates standard 10.4.c are available in the appended “FYS Timeline.”*

Problem #2: FYS-E does not meet corequisite guidelines, and it allows students to bypass college readiness standards altogether.

FYS is the course the institution uses to meet CPE guidelines for students who have not met academic readiness in reading (guidelines outlined in 13 KAR 2:020, section 7[4]). Like the other “enhanced” versions of courses designed to provide corequisite credit to students at MSU, FYS-E should include the same content and assignments as its “regular” version. Its only variance should be in support: it needs to provide more instructional time for students who have not met readiness standards in reading. Unlike ENG 100-E or the enhanced versions of General Education Math courses, FYS-E is categorically different than its regular option. It includes an “extra” set of reading assignments, thus adding more work to students who have already been identified as not being college ready. Furthermore, the grading scale allows students to pass the course without passing (or even attempting) the reading “add on.” ***This means that the institution is credentialing “college readiness” in reading without being able to guarantee that standards in reading have been met.***

Problem #3: the administration has not worked with Senate to rectify the problems. Faculty have acknowledged they did not properly oversee the creation of the new FYS, and, for close to two years, they have worked within shared governance structures to rectify documented problems. This governance work has been stalled or dismissed because the administration will not acknowledge that problem #1 or problem #2 exist.

FYS Timeline

- FYS was created in 2008-2009 General Education reform effort, the same effort that produced 499C.
- After the General Education program that included FYS was approved, the institution adopted a QEP designed to foster critical thinking skills within the already existing FYS class.

- In 2017, the upper administration unilaterally dissolved the “critical thinking” QEP. This decision was made without the input of the persons who had designed the “critical thinking” QEP or the faculty person who was then tasked with FYS coordination.
 - It was the position of upper administration (a position voiced by the Associate Provost) that the dissolution of the “critical thinking” QEP was equivalent to the dissolution of the 3-hour course faculty had designed before the “critical thinking” QEP was chosen.
 - The Associate Provost was tasked by the previous provost and the current President to create a new version of FYS focused on “student success.”
 - The membership of the “FYS Redesign Team” was determined by administration. Only four of the ten “redesign” members were faculty.
 - The “faculty input” to the course is limited to a few discrete units that the Associate Provost asked select faculty persons to generate.
 - The final version of the “redesigned” FYS was approved through an ad hoc curricular review created and overseen by the Associate Provost.
 - The Associate Provost, listed as a reviewer/approver in more than one place in the curriculum forms, is actually the originator of the new FYS.
 - The name listed on the form as the originator of the new FYS is the former coordinator of FYS, who was asked to sign the curriculum form after she was administratively removed from her coordinator position. This person did not help create the new FYS.
 - The new FYS was presented to the faculty on the GEC as a temporary solution that was designed to “teach out” the current program as a new General Education was being created. (Note: this new program removed FYS from the core and did not include any sort of freshman orientation.)
 - The Associate Provost assembled an ad hoc FYS committee to oversee the “redesigned” FYS. At peak faculty inclusion, only 4 of the 12 ad hoc committee members were faculty persons.
 - The Associate Provost herself presented the General Education Council with the curricular paperwork for the “enhanced” version of FYS. (Note: Associate Provost is also responsible for ensuring the institution meets corequisite guidelines.)
- While the Associate Provost was working on a freshman orientation that conforms to Goal 2, strategy 7 of the “Student Success” portion of MSU’s Strategic Plan, the General Education Taskforce, working under time constraints imposed by a previous provost, proposed an entirely new General Education program titled “LUX.”
- In Spring 2018, Faculty Senate passed a resolution resolving to review the recommendations of LUX “in a time frame of its own devising” in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the 2008-2009 effort (wherein an ambitious proposal for reform faltered because administratively promised resourced never materialized and assessment efforts had not been determined).
 - In 2019, interim Provost Albert, working in consultation with faculty leaders, crafted an ad hoc committee to revisit the General Education reform effort. This effort produced a streamlined program that re-introduced FYS to the General Education core, under the assumption that FYS would be placed back under faculty control and gain more actual academic content (in order to fulfill its “enhanced” function as a reading course).
 - The revised proposal (or the “LUX revision”) was presented to Senate in 2019 before it was approved via a faculty-wide vote.
 - While the ad hoc committee was working on the General Education curriculum, Senate was revising the General Education committee in order to address the process issues that led to FYS being removed from faculty control in the first place. A revised General Education committee (GEC) was approved by Senate in Fall 2019 and a new FYS subcommittee was approved by the same body in February 2020.
 - The 2019-2020 Chair and Chair-elect of Senate had multiple conversations with the upper administration (the Associate Provost, the interim Provost, and the President) throughout 2019-2020 about FYS and its attendant problems. Faculty leadership (including the entirety of the 2019-2020 Senate Executive Council) supplied multiple documents and written responses to administrative queries re: the GEC and FYS.
 - At no point has the administration been able to effectively demonstrate that the redesigned FYS course went through a properly vetted curricular review process or that faculty are in any way in given the “primary responsibility for the content, quality, or effectiveness” (SACSCOC standard 10.4.c) of the redesigned FYS.
 - Faculty-led efforts to enshrine proper channels for General Education curricular review have been stalled or, in the case of the new FYS committee, summarily dismissed.
 - In an October 14, 2020 email to the President of Senate regarding FYS, President Morgan stated that he did not “see anything that would run contrary to SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation.” In this same email, Dr. Morgan stated that the FYS curriculum was approved by the GEC and the University Curriculum Committee. While the new FYS was approved by the GEC as “temporary” solution, the course was never approved by the University Curriculum

Committee because General Education curriculum does not go through the university undergraduate curriculum committee.

Final note: the staffing of the current version of FYS does not run counter to SACSCOC credentialing because the administratively created course is defined—in UAR 113.02 category J—as a “non-disciplinary First Year Seminar/Student Success” course. Important point: University **Administrative** Regulations are, by their very nature, administratively defined, and the definition of the new FYS course (and the persons the administration wishes to teach it) is buried in a document that is supposed to offer “Guidelines for Assessing Faculty Credentials.” The majority of persons who teach FYS are fractionalized staff.

Senator Boram, (COS) appointed member (2017-current) to the ad hoc FYS subcommittee to General Education Committee, responded as “someone looking from the inside.” He claimed **Problem #1**, unmet SACSCOC Standard, was a bit ‘contrived’ because “as a faculty member involved in preparing content and reviewing content for the entire course, I find disturbing and disrespectful of the faculty involved in this.” Boram went on to state that the course curriculum was reviewed by faculty in Summer 2020; the “content, quality, and effectiveness of the course” review involved several hours work and included looking at individual quizzes and student evaluations. He believes that the faculty on the committee (currently four administratively chosen faculty who have been on the [ad hoc committee](#) since summer 2017) have improved the course. Boram stated that **Problem #2** is a continual issue. He claimed that the Department of English refused to undertake teaching remedial reading and that placing the course as such within FYS was the only way to retrieve complete data on reading capabilities and thus was placed as FYS-E. Boram explained that a lack of qualified and motivated instructors at the same time as lack of university funding led to staff fractionalization in order to properly staff the needed amount of FYS courses. The focus of the course then became “what it takes to be a good college student.” Boram confirmed that the process for approving the FYS course was approval by the General Education Council, of which the FYS was (and still is) a [subcommittee](#). Boram questioned why QEP was included in FYS overview. Regent responded that in documentation received by FS from GEC and administration, Associate Provost (Dr. Laurie Couch) timeline in 2017 began with creating a student success based FYS. Couch linked FYS with QEP.

President Grupe responded to Senator Boram, and other FYS subcommittee members present- Chris Beckham and Janet Ratliff, that Faculty Senate in their emphasis of having only four administratively appointed faculty to this ad hoc committee within a group of 12 persons that faculty could be overruled by administrators. Faculty Senate believes that the four faculty on the committee acted in good faith, following the direction of committee leadership.

Dr. Sue Tallichet (FS guest) stated it was her understanding the students could “get through [FYS] without ever having to really crack a book and read. And if there’s one problem our students have, it’s they can’t read. When they can’t read, they can’t write very well either.” In her 28 years at MSU, she has seen the reading ability decrease, “I really think that something needs to be done here for us to get control of what’s going on. I don’t understand why this isn’t a faculty-controlled process and outcome.” President Grupe agreed and briefly reiterated purpose of the FYS standing committee resolution passed by Faculty Senate March 5, 2020.

Regent Adams provided clarification about “E” or enhanced course definition, something no faculty member in English knew about until informed they would deal with enhanced writing. Administrators over English made the decision regarding ENG 100, just as the Associate Provost made the decision regarding the enhancement of FYS. Regent praised Associate Provost decision, citing WKU’s [IDST 199](#) as model course. An enhanced course must be identical courses and materials; FYS and FYS-E are not identical courses and materials. Students are supposed to receive extra time and assistance in completing assignments. Regent had alerted Provost, Associate Provost, and President of the issue that a student could pass FYS-E without completing the enhanced reading assignments, no changes were made to syllabus until Faculty Senate became involved. Persons teaching the E course are approved by an administrator in College of Education; a faculty who has successfully taught developmental reading was excluded from teaching FYS-E.

Senator Finch summarized and discussed a comparison chart of Provost suggested changes to FYS standing committee constituency and FS approved standing committee structure.

Senator Hare stated the approved FYS committee constituency, “comes down to the SACSCOC requirement [that] the primary responsibility for the content quality and effectiveness of the curriculum is with its faculty. . . Whatever form this takes, the faculty must be the primary, have the primary oversight of it just as it should have the primary oversight of all general education.”

Dr. David Long (FS Guest) presented his concern regarding FYS teacher evaluation and curriculum development. Summarizing from the Long-Hail report regarding Hybrid Faculty Evaluation, affirmed that there is **no meaningful evaluation of the current teaching of instructors.** **There is a “feigned glance at it by an administrator who gives**

packaged materials to instructors.” Instructors have no meaningful feedback on the quality of their teaching from peer teachers, instructors, or administrators. Long supported Senator Hare, “that kind of concern for quality and that concern for evaluation it’s not there. It should be sending up at least one variety of red flag to capacity about grabbing this thing back and taking ownership of it.” Of greater concern, “This is the entry point for students. We have a lot of first-generation students who absolutely need some of the skills in this class. You’re not doing that under the current implementation, because you’re doing a really bad job at it. So, either take this thing back and in charge of the faculty and make it a true academic class credit or let them handle it in student services.”

Regent Adams questioned why a revision would be needed to reflect college designations as administrators have classified in UAR 113.03 FYS as being non-disciplinary.

Laura Rucker, Staff Congress Vice-Chair, stated that staff concerns stem from workload, lack of teaching evaluation, and teaching feedback. Workload for most staff is 12-month contract with around 40 hours per week. Original idea was that fractionalized time would not exceed 10% of overall time; the time required has increased. Existing staff have experienced job description revisions that now include teaching FYS with supplemental pay tacked onto base salary. Job descriptions for new hires include teaching FYS as a job expectation with no additional pay. Those advertised jobs are offered at lower salary.

Dr Tallichet asked whether or not Faculty Senate leadership was going to meet with SACSCOC during its site visit Spring 2021. Clarification of timeline for visit and those being interviewed was requested from President Grupe. Grupe had not been apprised or invited to any part of SACSCOC visit. Both Regent Adams and Senator Lennex confirmed that they did not have a timeline nor had any information about the site visit.

Senator Hare motioned, seconded by Senator Lennex, the following: The faculty senate will create a joint faculty staff task force with the Provost tasked with addressing the key problems identified in this meeting.

- Staffing FYS (including fractionalization)
- Oversight of FYS (black box of Undergraduate Education & Student Success)
- Solving the key problems identified with the current FYS
- To be completed by Dec. 10, 2020.

Faculty Senate approved the motion. Grupe and Regent will consult with Provost to bring draft membership of ad hoc committee to Executive Council meeting Nov 2. It is anticipated that Faculty Senate will be presented with draft membership and charge at the Nov 5 Faculty Senate meeting.

Adjourn: 4:57pm